



Public
Service
Commission

Talent pools guide for HR and hiring managers

January 2020

Talent pools guide for HR and hiring managers

Contents

Introduction	1
<i>Purpose of guide</i>	1
<i>About talent pools</i>	1
<i>Benefits of talent pools</i>	2
<i>Types of talent pools</i>	2
Questions and answers	1
<i>Setting up talent pools</i>	1
1. How do I set up a talent pool?	1
2. How do I set up a joint talent pool?	1
3. Can I set up a talent pool for a specific diversity group?	2
4. Do I need to advertise to set up a talent pool?	2
5. Do I need to say in the job ad that a talent pool is being created?	2
6. Do I need to complete referee checks to set up a talent pool?	3
7. How can I increase diversity and minimise bias when setting up a talent pool?	3
8. Are talent pools set up in rank order like an e-list?	3
9. What are privacy and personal information considerations for setting up talent pools?	4
10. When does a talent pool commence?	4
<i>Using talent pools</i>	6
11. Do I need to advertise to fill a role from a talent pool?	6
12. Do I need to complete further assessments to employ a person from a talent pool?	6
13. How can I minimise bias when selecting from a talent pool?	6
14. What if my role has different focus capabilities to those assessed in the talent pool?	7
15. Can I use a talent pool to fill a role at a higher grade?	7
16. What if my role has capabilities at a higher level than assessed for the talent pool?	7
17. What if my role has capabilities at a lower level than assessed for the talent pool?	7
18. Can I use a talent pool to fill a role at a lower grade?	8
19. Can I choose a specific candidate from a talent pool without reviewing all candidates in the pool?	8
20. Can I choose a candidate from a talent pool from a specific diversity group to fill an identified or targeted role?	8
21. What is best practice in candidate care for talent pools?	9
22. Can a person re-enter a talent pool if they accept an offer of employment?	9
23. Can I access another agency's talent pool?	10
24. Do I have to use a talent pool to fill a role?	10
25. What if there is no one in a talent pool who is suitable for my role?	10

Introduction

Purpose of guide

The information in this guide is designed to assist NSW Public Service agencies to set up, use and manage talent pools. It is up to each agency to decide if and how they wish to use talent pools, consistent with the requirements in the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*, *Government Sector Employment Regulation 2014* and *Government Sector Employment (General) Rules 2014* (GSE Rules).

The first part of the guide describes what talent pools are and their benefits.

The second part of the guide uses questions and answers to assist agencies to:

- Set up their own or joint talent pools with other Public Service agencies
- Fill roles from talent pools, including [NSW Public Service talent pools](#).

About talent pools

A talent pool is a group of candidates who have completed a [comparative assessment](#) and demonstrated that they meet the standards needed to perform a role. The maximum time a person can be placed in a talent pool is 18 months.

Talent pools can be used to fill ongoing, temporary or term roles that are full time or part time.

[Rule 19](#) of the GSE Rules defines what a talent pool is and sets out the requirements that apply to the establishment and use of talent pools. In deciding to employ a person who is in a talent pool, agencies must also comply with the requirements set out in the GSE Rules for ongoing employment or temporary employment (see Table 1).

Table 1: Minimum requirements for ongoing and temporary employment in GSE Rules

Kind of employment	GSE Rule	Assessment	Advertising
Ongoing employment	GSE rule 20	Comparative assessment	External advertising on the I work for NSW website
Temporary or term employment (more than 12 months)	GSE rule 22	Comparative assessment	Advertising across the Public Service
Temporary or term employment (less than 12 months)	GSE rule 21	Suitability assessment or comparative assessment	No advertising

It is recommended that external advertising is used to set up all talent pools. This meets the requirements for ongoing and temporary employment and enables agencies to make an employment decision without having to do additional advertising.

Benefits of talent pools

There are many benefits to be gained from setting up and using talent pools to fill common roles within an agency or across the public sector. Talent pools:

- Help agencies to recruit talent significantly faster and reduce the cost of filling roles
- Are a great way to attract the best people from the widest pool of candidates
- Provide access talent for up to 18 months without having to advertise or run an assessment process to fill a role
- Benefit candidates who can go through a single assessment process to be considered for multiple opportunities
- Help agencies to access talent to meet diversity targets, such as to employ people with disability or Aboriginal leaders.

While setting up talent pools can be resource-intensive initially, the benefits are substantial over the longer term.

Using the Public Service Commission's [NSW Public Service talent pools](#) further benefits agencies as the setup and administration are centrally managed.

Types of talent pools

Agencies can establish talent pools in the following ways:

- Carrying out an advertising and assessment process for a role specifically to have candidates available to meet current and future workforce needs
- As a result of a recruitment action, where a candidate or candidates have met the standards for the role but have not been offered or accepted employment.

Agencies can establish talent pools jointly with other Public Service agencies.

The Public Service Commission establishes and manages a number of [Public Service talent pools](#) that agencies can use to access diverse and high calibre talent.

Questions and answers

Setting up talent pools

1. How do I set up a talent pool?

[GSE rule 19](#) requires that you do a [comparative assessment](#) to set up a talent pool. That is, under [GSE rule 17](#), you need to:

- Screen for essential requirements, such as a qualification or licence
- Review an application and resume
- Assess candidates using at least 3 capability-based assessments, one of which is an interview
- Use more than one assessor.

Referee checks also need to be done to meet the requirements of comparative assessment but can be done when you are considering employing a person from a talent pool rather than when placing them in the pool.

You also need to consider your advertising needs based on the type of employment you will be offering. In most circumstances, it is best to use external advertising as this allows you to attract the widest possible pool of candidates and gives you maximum flexibility to offer ongoing, temporary or term employment. External advertising means advertising on the NSW Government's jobs website: [I work for NSW](#). It may also include any other form of advertising that is accessible to the general public.

When planning your capability-based assessments we recommend that you assess all capabilities in the role description. The minimum standard for a comparative assessment is an assessment of the focus capabilities, knowledge and experience. However, assessing all capabilities makes it easier to use the talent pool for similar roles that have different focus capabilities.

All candidates who demonstrate that they meet the standards for the role through the comparative assessment may be included in the talent pool.

2. How do I set up a joint talent pool?

The process for setting up a talent pool with other Public Service agencies is the same as referred to in [Question 1](#) (above).

To ensure the talent pool is set up, managed and used effectively you will need to decide jointly on who has responsibility for the following:

- Developing the role description
- Designing, managing and funding the assessment process
- Managing the talent pool for its duration which is likely to involve:
 - Responding to requests for candidate information
 - Communicating with candidates who are in the talent pool
 - Updating candidate information (e.g. employment status, withdrawal from pool, change in preferences etc.).

You also need to make sure that you seek candidate consent for their personal information to be shared among the agencies that are using the talent pool.

You can also make a request to the [Public Service Commission](#) to set up a Public Service talent pool where you think there is demand for filling similar roles across the sector.

3. Can I set up a talent pool for a specific diversity group?

Yes, you can use [GSE rule 26](#) to set up a talent pool for eligible persons listed in GSE rule 26(4). The main groups are:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people
- People with disability
- People under the age of 25 years.

Setting up a talent pool for one of these diversity groups can help you to improve employment opportunities for people from that group and enhance diversity in your agency.

To set up a talent pool for eligible persons you can follow the same steps as outlined in [Question 1](#) (above). [GSE rule 26 \(3\)](#) also allows you to make modifications to the requirements in Part 3 of the GSE Rules to facilitate the employment of eligible persons.

Modifications can generally be made to advertising requirements and assessment processes. You still need to ensure that the capabilities of eligible persons are assessed against the standards for the role using relevant capability-based assessments.

Employment decisions under [GSE rule 26](#) require that the person is suitable for the role and has the greatest merit of the eligible persons seeking to be employed in the role. This means that you need to consider the merit of the people in the talent pool to employ someone from that pool.

In seeking to target a specific diversity group, agencies should also ensure that they are complying with the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*. Further information about the requirements that apply is available from the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW (www.antidiscrimination.justice.nsw.gov.au).

A fact sheet on using [GSE rule 26](#) to employ people with disability is available on the Public Service Commission's [disability employment webpage](#).

4. Do I need to advertise to set up a talent pool?

We strongly recommend that you use external advertising on the NSW Government's job website ([I work for NSW](#)) when setting up talent pools. This allows you to attract the widest possible pool of candidates to apply and gives you maximum flexibility to offer ongoing, temporary or term employment.

You can also supplement your external advertising on [I work for NSW](#) by advertising on other platforms. This is a good way of attracting candidates from diverse backgrounds.

5. Do I need to say in the job ad that a talent pool is being created?

It is suggested that you state the purpose of the recruitment action in the job ad, including that you are creating a talent pool and the type(s) of employment that may be offered for the duration of the talent pool. For example:

Talent Pool - Administrative Support Officers

We are seeking candidates who are interested in joining the Public Service Commission's talent pool for administrative support officers. This is a great opportunity for you to be considered for administrative support officer or other similar roles that come up in the Public Service Commission over the next 18 months. Ongoing and temporary employment opportunities may be offered.

6. Do I need to complete referee checks to set up a talent pool?

Referee checks do not need to be done to place a person in a talent pool. Referee checks must be done prior to employing a person from a talent pool in ongoing, temporary or term employment to meet the requirements of a comparative assessment.

In deciding when to do referee checks, you may wish to consider:

- Whether the currency of the referee checks means that it is best they are done when a person is being considered for a role
- If it is likely to be more effective for the manager who is filling the role to do the referee checks.

7. How can I increase diversity and minimise bias when setting up a talent pool?

There are different ways to minimise bias and potentially increase diversity depending on the stage of the recruitment process: attraction, assessment and selection.

The following steps may assist in minimising bias when setting up a talent pool:

- Removing candidates' demographic details from the information reviewed by assessors, such as resume and application
- Ensuring assessors are aware of the potential for unconscious bias and the types of biases that may impact on selection decisions (you could provide training on bias to assessors).

The Department of Premier & Cabinet has produced a guide on [Behavioural approaches to increasing workforce diversity](#) which may assist agencies to minimise biases in recruitment processes.

8. Are talent pools set up in rank order like an e-list?

Candidates in talent pools are not ranked. All candidates must demonstrate they meet the required standards for a role through a comparative assessment to be placed in the talent pool.

Similar roles may have different standards, such as different focus capabilities, specialist knowledge or experience, role location and role duration. You have some flexibility to select a candidate who meets the requirements for a particular role. (See below for more information on using talent pools where there are small differences in role requirements such as capability levels).

9. What are privacy and personal information considerations for setting up talent pools?

You should tell candidates about the way their personal information will be used and disclosed and seek formal consent for this use before including them in a talent pool. A good way of doing this is to list the data that is collected (e.g. profile information, work and educational experience, assessment report, selection report etc.) and identify who will be authorised to access this information (e.g. HR and hiring managers within the agency). You should only use and disclose personal information for the purpose for which it was collected, unless you have the candidate's consent, subject to limited exceptions under privacy legislation. You should notify candidates if anything changes in protecting candidates' privacy or storing or handling personal information.

Other things you should consider doing in the interests of protecting privacy and personal information include:

- Only collecting personal information directly from the candidate, unless they have authorised collection from someone else
- Informing candidates who will be storing their information
- Notifying candidates about how they can access and correct their personal information
- Storing personal information securely, keeping it no longer than necessary and disposing of it appropriately. It should also be protected from unauthorised access, use, modification and disclosure
- Allowing candidates to access their personal information without excessive delay or expense
- Where necessary, you must allow candidates to update, correct or amend their personal information.

If you wish to provide opportunities for employment in targeted roles based on demographic information you need to seek agreement from candidates that they want to be considered for these types of roles and consent to their demographic information being used for this purpose.

You may consider establishing or using an existing protocol for sharing information about candidates with hiring managers within the agency or between agencies for joint talent pools. As with any hiring process it is important that candidate confidentiality is maintained.

Refer to the Information and Privacy Commission's summary of the [Information Protection Principles - for agencies](#) or visit their website for more information: www.ipc.nsw.gov.au.

10. When does a talent pool commence?

For a talent pool to be established, the following steps of a comparative assessment must have been completed:

- Screening for essential requirements, such as a qualification or licence
- Reviewing an application and resume
- Assessing candidates using at least 3 capability-based assessments, one of which is an interview.

[GSE rule 19\(5\)](#) excludes referee checks from the comparative assessment for the purpose of including a person in a talent pool. Referee checks can be done when a person is being considered for a role, but the timing of the referee checks does not affect the date that a talent pool commences.

A decision also needs to be made about which candidates meet the standards for the role and who will be offered a place in the talent pool.

A person's place in a talent pool commences from the date the outcomes of the selection process are approved by a delegated officer and is for a maximum period of 18 months from that date.

Using talent pools

11. Do I need to advertise to fill a role from a talent pool?

Talent pools are usually created following a comparative assessment process after external advertising so that you do not need to advertise again to fill a role from the pool. External advertising means advertising on the NSW Government's jobs website: [I work for NSW](#). It may also include any other form of advertising that is accessible to the general public.

You should confirm with your HR team that external advertising has been done before offering ongoing employment to someone in a talent pool.

12. Do I need to complete further assessments to employ a person from a talent pool?

As candidates have generally been through comparative assessment to be included in the talent pool you do not need to complete further assessments.

We recommend that you develop a shortlist of candidates in the talent pool who you determine are best suited to the role you are looking to fill and the needs of your agency. This may take into consideration factors that distinguish this role from other roles such as subject matter knowledge. It is also an opportunity to consider ways of building diversity in your team to reflect the breadth of difference that exists within the NSW community.

You could then do an informal interview with the candidate(s). You do not need to convene a formal panel for this. This may be as simple as an informal discussion between the manager and candidate to determine their suitability for the role you are filling. Remember, the candidate has already demonstrated that they meet the requirements for the talent pool role through a comparative assessment.

Where the requirements for the role you are filling are slightly different to those in the role description used to set up the talent pool, we recommend that you consider doing an assessment(s) of the focus capabilities, knowledge and experience that have not already been assessed.

See PSC's [Recruitment and selection guide](#) for ideas about different assessments you could use.

13. How can I minimise bias when selecting from a talent pool?

The following steps may assist in minimising bias when selecting from a talent pool:

1. Removing candidates' demographic details from the information given to hiring managers
2. Being aware of the potential for unconscious bias and the types of biases that may impact on selection decisions.

The Department of Premier & Cabinet has produced a guide on [Behavioural approaches to increasing workforce diversity](#) which may hiring managers minimise biases when making selection decisions.

14. What if my role has different focus capabilities to those assessed in the talent pool?

Where a small number of focus capabilities are different to those in the role description used to set up the talent pool, we recommend that you consider doing an assessment(s) of the focus capabilities that have not already been assessed. This ensures that the person has demonstrated that they meet the required standards for the role.

15. Can I use a talent pool to fill a role at a higher grade?

We strongly advise against using a talent pool to fill a role at a higher grade for the following reasons:

- It creates inequity for individuals who miss out on the opportunity to apply for a role advertised at the higher level
- The capability requirements of the higher graded role would be different, and candidates will not have been assessed against these higher capability levels.

16. What if my role has capabilities at a higher level than assessed for the talent pool?

Where the capability level of a small number of focus capabilities for the role is higher than those in the role description used to set up the talent pool, we recommend that you consider the extent of difference before using the talent pool. First check the span between the capability levels (e.g. Highly Advanced versus Intermediate). Then consider the behavioural indicators for each role:

- Where you think the behavioural indicators are quite similar for the focus capability and would have little or no impact on performance of the role you should not generally need to do a further assessment
- Where you think the behavioural indicators are more advanced for the focus capability of your role and that this may impact on performance of the role you could do a fit-for-purpose assessment at the required capability level for that capability.

We recommend that you consider other options for filling the role in the following circumstances:

- Where the capability level for a substantial number of focus capabilities is higher than those in the role description used to set up the talent pool
- Where there is substantial difference in the focus capability level(s) between the roles (e.g. Adept versus Highly Advanced).

Note: You should check that all focus capabilities needed for your role have been assessed. If not, see [Question 12](#).

17. What if my role has capabilities at a lower level than assessed for the talent pool?

Where the capability level of a small number of focus capabilities for the role is lower than those in the role description used to set up the talent pool you can use the talent pool. This is because the behavioural indicators for capabilities are cumulative – that is, the behavioural indicators up to and including the capability level specified should be able to be demonstrated. The candidate can

therefore be considered to have the capability needed to perform the role having been assessed at the higher capability level.

Note: You should check that all focus capabilities needed for your role have been assessed. If not, see [Question 12](#).

18. Can I use a talent pool to fill a role at a lower grade?

We strongly recommend against using a talent pool to fill a role at a lower grade for the following reasons:

- It creates inequity for individuals who miss out on the opportunity to apply for a role advertised at the lower level
- There is a risk of negatively impacting the experience of the talent pool process for candidates by offering roles at a lower level than what they have applied for
- Candidates in the talent pool could become quickly disengaged if they are placed in a lower level role that does not make full use of their capabilities.

19. Can I choose a specific candidate from a talent pool without reviewing all candidates in the pool?

NSW Public Service talent pools

For [NSW Public Service talent pools](#) you can choose a candidate from the pool without reviewing all the candidates in the talent pool if you have determined they are the person best suited to the available role. However, by reviewing the suitability of other candidates in the talent pool you may be able to reduce bias and improve diversity outcomes.

You can submit an online candidate request and forward your acknowledgement email to talentpools@psc.nsw.gov.au to request details about a specific candidate.

Agency talent pools

It is up to agencies to decide whether a candidate can be chosen from the talent pool without reviewing all the candidates in the talent pool. All candidates have been assessed as meeting the standards for the role. The next step is to find the person who is best suited to the requirements of the role and the needs of the agency. Sometimes reviewing the talent available will help you make the best possible decision and reduce bias in decision making.

20. Can I choose a candidate from a talent pool from a specific diversity group to fill an identified or targeted role?

It is possible for you to select a person from a talent pool who is from a specific diversity group to fill an identified or targeted role. You must first ensure that candidates in the talent pool have agreed to be considered for identified or targeted roles. They must also have consented to the use of their demographic information to be identified for this purpose.

If there is more than one candidate from the diversity group in the talent pool, you need to consider who is the person best suited to the role and the needs of the agency.

21. What is best practice in candidate care for talent pools?

Communication with candidates is an essential part of managing talent pools. Actively engaging with candidates for the duration of the talent pool has benefits for agencies and candidates. Types of communications include:

- Sending a welcome email when a candidate is placed in the talent pool (this should be sent after the candidate has formally accepted the offer to be placed in the talent pool). This is a good time to:
 - Allocate a contact person for the duration of the talent pool
 - Manage candidate expectations – e.g. let them know:
 - Referee checks will be carried out before an offer of employment is made (even if referee checks have been done to place the person in a talent pool, the hiring manager may decide to do their own checks)
 - They may be contacted by HR or hiring managers about employment opportunities
 - They may be asked to a ‘job-fit’ interview or to do additional assessment(s)
 - They may be asked to complete pre-employment checks (e.g. working with children or criminal records checks)
 - Being placed in a talent pool is not an offer of employment and does not guarantee an offer of employment
 - They can choose to withdraw from the talent pool at any time
 - Confirm preferences, e.g.:
 - Location
 - Receiving offers for ongoing, temporary or term employment
- Sending regular communications to candidates about the talent pool (e.g. monthly or quarterly). This could inform candidates about agency interest in using the pool. It is also an opportunity to confirm that candidates still wish to be included in the talent pool and to update their preferences and profile information.

It is important that candidates’ personal information is handled appropriately. Sharing personal information about candidates within the agency (or with other agencies for joint talent pools) is a necessary way of considering a candidate for an employment opportunity. As with any hiring process it is essential that candidate confidentiality is respected and maintained.

22. Can a person re-enter a talent pool if they accept an offer of employment?

A person who is placed in a talent pool remains in the talent pool until the expiry date (up to 18 months), unless they opt out at some stage. This means that a person can be made further offers of ongoing, temporary or term employment while they are in the talent pool.

A person could be considered for other roles even though they have accepted an offer of employment or have commenced employment. The main considerations are to:

- Ensure that a person who has taken up an offer of employment is not contacted unnecessarily about other jobs
- Give hiring managers confidence that the candidates they are considering are still seeking employment.

To help in managing talent pools, the following approaches are suggested:

- Limiting further offers of employment to employee-initiated requests
- Asking a person who takes up an offer of employment if they wish to be considered for other roles that come up while they are still in the talent pool.

A person's time in the talent pool is not extended beyond the duration of the talent pool if they take up a temporary employment opportunity.

23. Can I access another agency's talent pool?

It is up to the agency that set up the talent pool to decide if they wish to provide access to the talent pool to other agencies. The privacy of candidates and handling of their personal information also need to be considered. While candidates may have consented to their personal information being shared within the agency that set up the talent pool, they may not wish this information to be passed on to other agencies. The agency that set up the talent pool should seek the candidate's consent before sharing their personal information outside of the agency.

24. Do I have to use a talent pool to fill a role?

Using an existing talent pool is likely to be a good option as it provides access to candidates who have already been through a comparative assessment process, saving you time and money.

Agencies can decide on the use of talent pools in line with their own policies, processes and workforce needs.

25. What if there is no one in a talent pool who is suitable for my role?

If you cannot find a suitable candidate in your agency's talent pool, you can consider alternative ways of filling your role including:

- Finding out if there is a [NSW Public Service talent pool](#) relevant to your role
- Exploring options for mobility, including as a development opportunity
- Running a new recruitment process.